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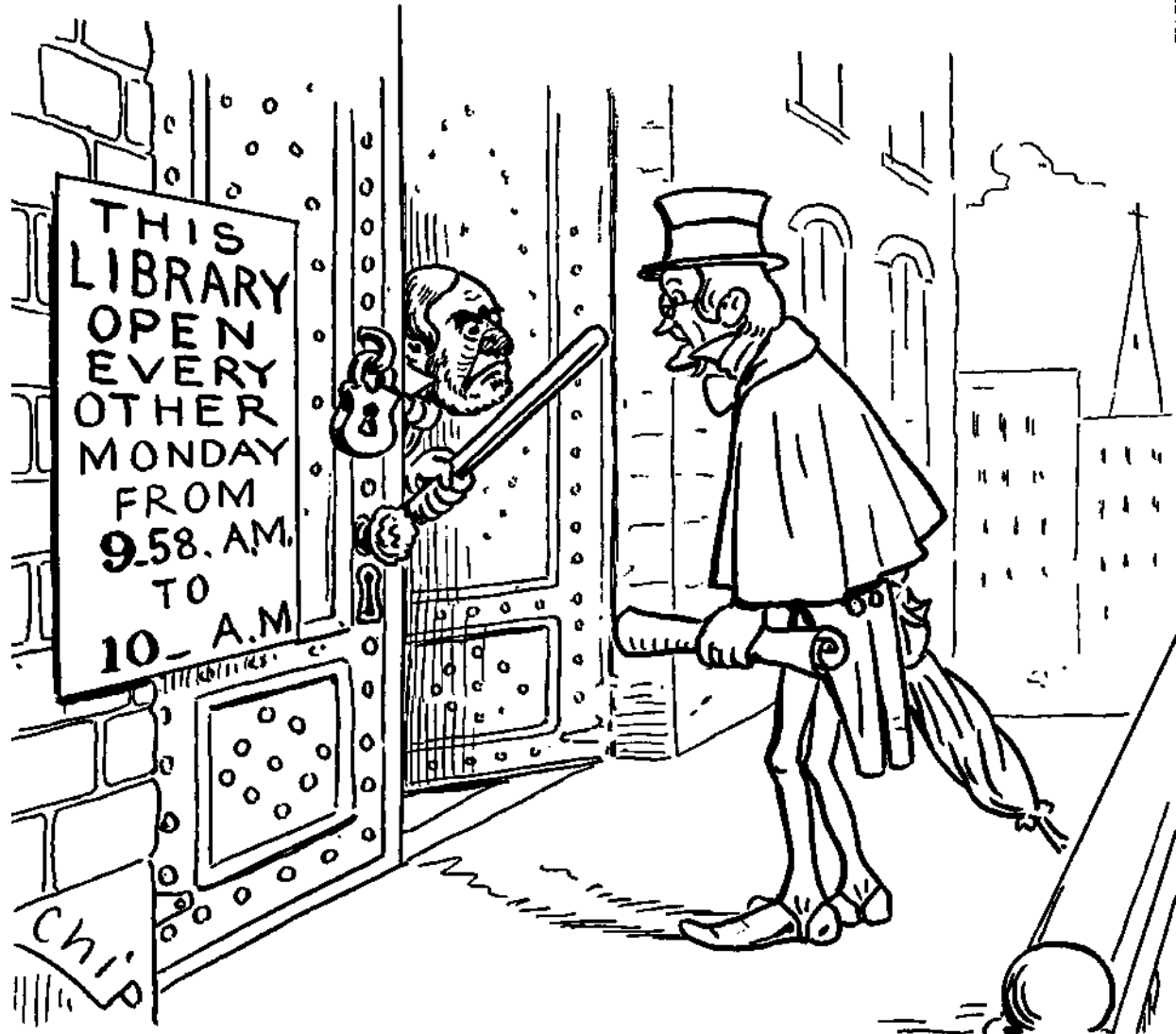
**Northumbria
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NEWCASTLE



University**Library**

The challenges facing public libraries in the Big Society:

Focusing on the role of volunteers, and the issues that surround their use



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Aim: To consider the role of volunteers in UK public libraries as a result of the drive towards the Big Society agenda

Challenges, past and present practice, key issues, viewpoints of stakeholders, variables that result in success, good practice

Library

Landscape:

A changing landscape

“A strong trend towards looking at alternate methods of governance and service delivery, with 50% of respondents currently looking or actively developing new models.” (CILIP 2012: 4)

“There is an increase in community managed libraries but no proper definition of what a community managed library is, how it is run and how it relates to strategic provision.” CILIP (2012: 7)

The facts



CIPFA 2011-2012

8% drop in
FTE staff

8.9% increase
in volunteers

Reduction of
201 library
service points

Declining
visits, book
issues

**Social:
Reductions
in public
library
usage**

**Political:
Community
Engagement
v Big Society**

**Social:
Consumerism**

**Economic:
Rolling back
the state**





Stage 1: Delphi

Volunteer
use expected
to grow
significantly

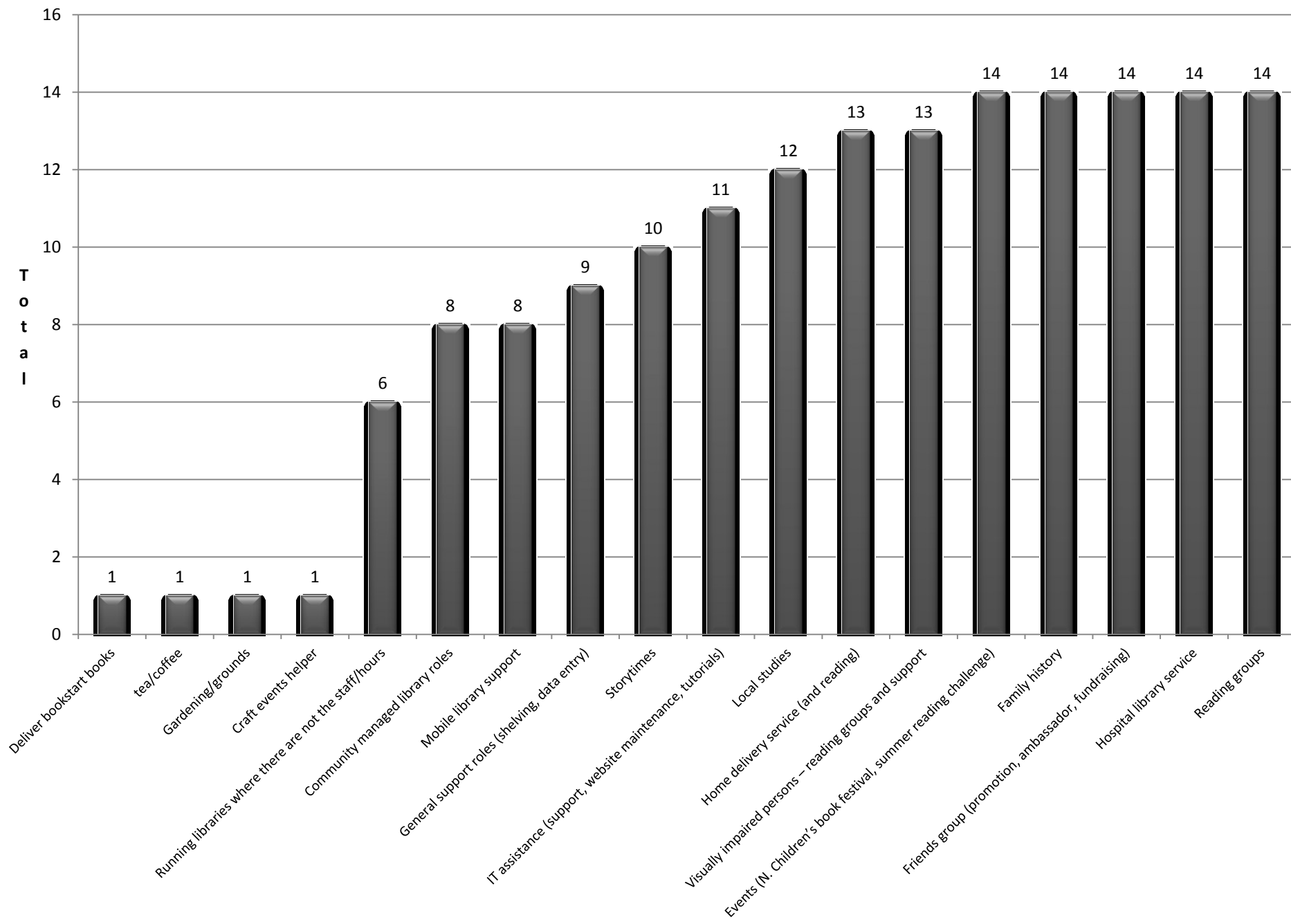
Volunteer use
has grown in
past 5-10
years

17 – 850
volunteers

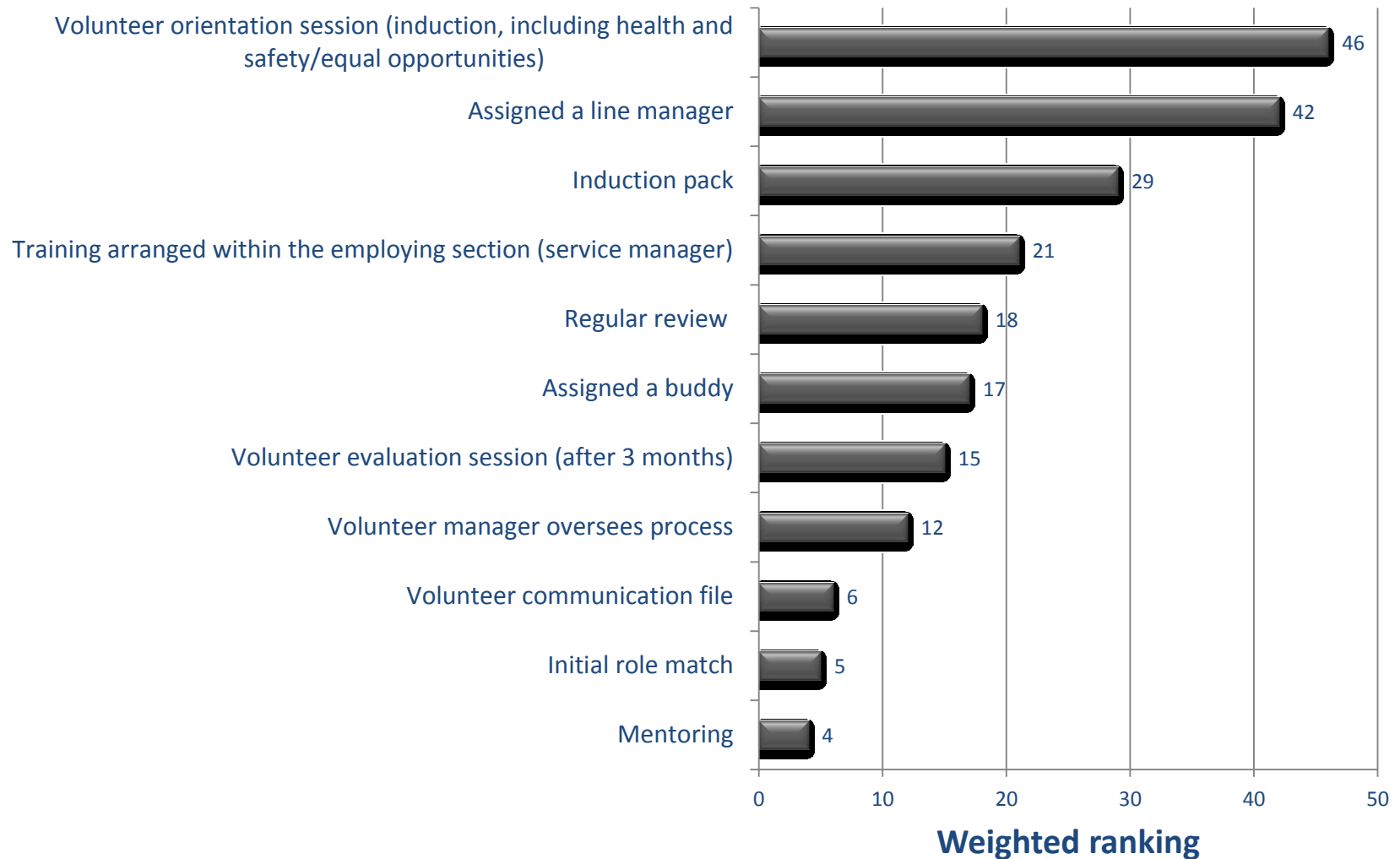


<http://www.flickr.com/photos/newtonfreelibrary/1251488786/>

Roles covered by volunteers



Main components of a volunteer training strategy



The benefits of using volunteers



Community and users

- Strengthen community cohesion
- Community engagement
- Community ownership
- Enhanced service
- Better access to paid staff



Library service

- Service enhancement and extension
- Providing services that are too expensive to fund
- Better engagement with the local community
- Expand potential library user audience
- New blood
- More advocates and supporters of the library service



Staff

- Volunteers support paid staff
- Paid staff can concentrate on service enhancing tasks
- Diversity of people

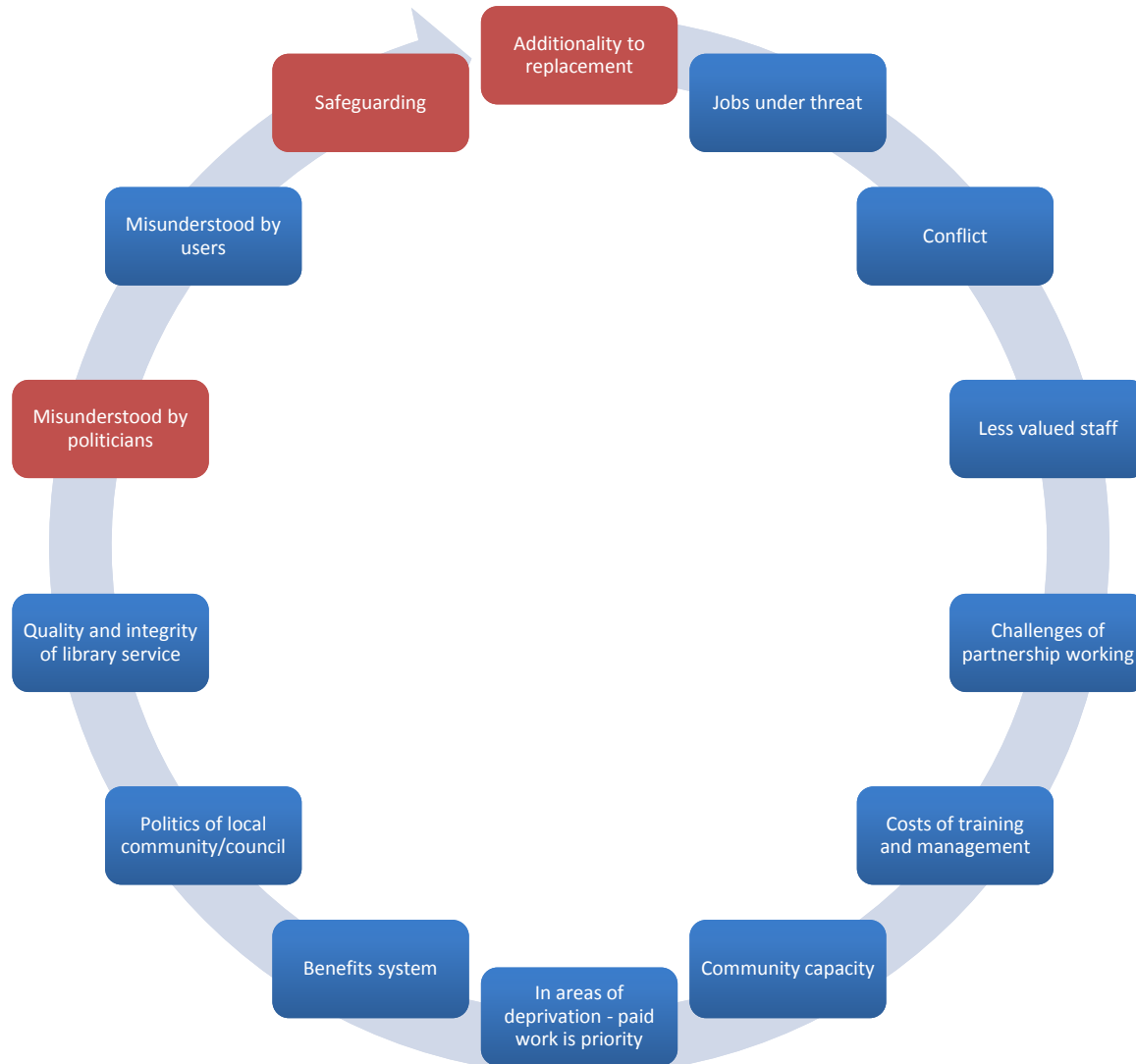


Volunteers

- Give something back to the community
- Work experience
- Wider community benefits
- Personal fulfilment and social belonging
- Work experience



The issues that arise with volunteer use



- Largely untested
- Capacity of volunteers
- Devaluing of paid staff
- Partnership working
- 'Saviour role'
- 1964 Public Libraries Act
- Long term sustainability



Conclusion

A giant
ideological
experiment
or a move to
greater
community
engagement?